CAR AND DRIVER ROAD TEST

PLYMOUTH GTX

The toughest car on the block this year may not be a Hemi

Pontiac GTO lovers better take their performance image and head for the hills. The Plymouth boys have breathed new life into the old 440 engine to produce a new monster capable of blowing off everything including a street Hemi up to 100 mph. Yes, it's another one of *those* cars, with a huge engine in a short-wheelbase (116-in.) body. And it has been named, appropriately we think, the GTX.

Chrysler Corporation began a tradition back in 1954 when they produced the first U.S. post-war sports sedan, the Chrysler 300. Among its contemporaries it stood alone as a good-handling, powerful and well-balanced car with adequate brakes and tough good looks. Each year since then, except for a relapse in the early '60s, Chrysler has continued to produce at least one car of this type. Our test GTX 440 is one of their best to date. It uses the revitalized Super Commando 440 cu. in. V-8 ("New Cars 1967," *C/D*, Oct. '66) as standard equipment and the famous 426 Hemi is optional. Despite more mass up front it is without a doubt the best-handling big Plymouth yet, although braking ability with the optional discs seems slightly down from last year. The new 440 produces 375 hp at 4600 rpm with 480 lbs./ft. of torque at 3200 rpm. Coupled with Chrysler's excellent TorqueFlite automatic transmission, which was on our test car, it is a joy to drive.

We like the GTX for several reasons, aside from its ability to turn 0-60-mph times consistently at 6.0 seconds. There are a great many sports sedans with similar capabili-

CONTINUED

ties, but the majority fall all over themselves when they arrive at their first twisting road. Not so the GTX. It sticks, and sticks well, under practically all road conditions. The front suspension uses high-rate torsion bars, heavy duty shock absorbers and a 0.94-in. diameter anti-sway bar. This heavy-duty set-up, plus excellent suspension geometry designed to keep the front wheels at right angles to the road surface, keeps the tires in firm contact with the ground at all times. The rear suspension appears, at first glance, to be a paradox. There is nothing to control axle movement other than two semi-elliptic leaf springs and heavy-duty shock absorbers. But the anticipated axle tramp, leaf spring windup and resultant poor adhesion simply doesn't happen. Instead it behaves beautifully. The secret is in the location of the axle brackets on the leaf spring. With most suspensions of this type, the axle is attached at the spring half-way point, just like on grandpa's buggy. On the GTX, and other Chrysler products, the axle is attached approximately ⅓ of the total spring length from the front pivot. This enables the spring to act as a traction rod—at the same time, the pivot is too close to the axle's mass for the spring to flex torsionally. Thus the rear is well located without adding expensive links. In fact it is so well located that driver-induced idiocies such as jumping the car over a hill at 80 mph so it would land sideways and out of shape in a hard right turn produced no ill effects whatsoever. The car simply landed, stabilized itself, and proceeded through the corner.

The only real fault in the GTX's handling is the overlight power steering. We don't enjoy wrestling with brutally stiff steering, but the GTX is at the other extreme, with a feather-soft touch requiring too little effort and giving even less road feel. As we struck ground after our flying excursions, for example, the steering hardly reacted. With all those wild things happening around us, it was very disconcerting to get no feedback through the wheel.

When we tested the 1966 Plymouth Satellite, equipped with a street Hemi and 4-speed transmission (*C/D*, April 1966), we were rather upset that the car didn't look like anything special. A Plain-Jane car sometimes fits well into life's order, but when a buyer forks over extra money for a fast car at the top of the line, he wants it to have a distinctive identification. That complaint has been remedied in the GTX, even though the sheet metal is essentially the same for 1967. Our test car stood out in traffic like George Lincoln Rockwell would in Watts. The car's special identity is dramatized by detail chrome strips around the fender lips, twin simulated air scoops on the hood and contrasting racing stripes that run the length of both front and rear decks. A special grille provides instant recognition at the front, and a similar trim panel between the tail lights does the job for the rear. A final touch is provided by a chrome pop-open gas filler on the left rear fender.

Inside, the GTX is uncluttered but mundane with a standard Belvedere dash and a console-mounted tachometer set so far forward and so low that it's visible mainly to rear-seat passengers. The one redeeming feature of the interior design is a pair of very comfortable and attractive thin-shell bucket seats. They allow the occupant to sit high for improved comfort and visibility, and are firm enough to prevent fatigue during extended periods of driving. A new safety feature, which is incorporated into practically all American 2-door cars for 1967, is a locking front seat back to prevent the seat from folding forward during a crash. But it all felt a little loose and uncertain on our test car and there were two or more inches of play before the backrest contacted its stop. There was sharp dissent among the staff on Chrysler's optional shoulder harness (or strap, as they call it) which crosses diagonally over the shoulder to the transmission tunnel. Some felt it was comfortable, while others dis-

(*Continued on page 88*)

Plymouth has given the GTX strong good looks and one of the best-handling sedan chassis we have ever driven. Unfortunately its optional front disc brakes are not in the same class

PLYMOUTH GTX

Manufacturer: Chrysler-Plymouth Division
Chrysler Motors Corp.
12200 East Jefferson
Detroit, Michigan

Vehicle type: Front-engine, rear-wheel-drive, 5-passenger sports sedan, all-steel integral body/chassis.

Number of dealers in U.S.: 4000

Price as tested: $N.A.

(Prices for the 1967 models had not been released by the manufacturers at press time. Our unofficial estimate would be ca. $3900.00, as our test car was equipped)

Options on test car: Disc front brakes, shoulder harnesses, AM radio, power steering, console, TorqueFlite automatic transmission.

ENGINE

Type: water-cooled V-8, cast iron block and heads, 5 main bearings
Bore x stroke..4.32 x 3.75 in, 109.7 x 95.2 mm
Displacement.....440 cu in, 7154 cc
Compression ratio.....10.1-to-one
Carburetion.....1 x 4-bbl Carter
Valve gear.....Pushrod-operated overhead valves, hydraulic lifters
Power (SAE).....375 bhp @ 4600 rpm
Torque (SAE).....480 lbs/ft @ 3200 rpm
Specific power output.....0.85 bhp/cu in, 52.4 bhp/liter
Maximum recommended engine speed.....5000 rpm

DRIVE TRAIN

Transmission:.....3-speed automatic, plus torque converter
Gearshift position:.....Console-mounted (PRND$_1$D$_2$L)

Gear	Ratio	Mph/1000 rpm	Max. test speed
I	2.45	10.2	51 mph (5000 rpm)
II	1.45	16.3	81 mph (5000 rpm)
III	1.00	23.6	118 mph (5000 rpm)
R	2.20	—10.7	N.A.

Max. torque converter ratio.....2.00 to one
Final drive ratio.....3.23 to one

DIMENSIONS AND CAPACITIES

Wheelbase.....116.0 in
Track.....F:59.5 in, R:58.5 in
Length.....200.5 in
Width.....76.4 in
Height.....54.0 in
Ground clearance.....5.9 in
Curb weight.....3869 lbs
Test weight.....4009 lbs
Weight distribution, F/R.....54.8/45.2%
Lbs/bhp (test weight).....10.7
Battery capacity.....1200 H, 70 amp/hr
Alternator capacity.....552 watts
Fuel capacity.....19.0 gal
Oil capacity.....4.0 qts
Water capacity.....18.0 qts

SUSPENSION

F: Ind., unequal length wishbones, torsion bars, anti-sway bar
R: Rigid axle, semi-elliptic leaf springs

STEERING

Type:.....Recirculating ball
Turns lock-to-lock.....5.3
Turning circle.....41 ft

BRAKES

F: Kelsey-Hayes 11.04-in vented discs
R: 10 x 2.5-in drums
Swept area.....387.8 sq in

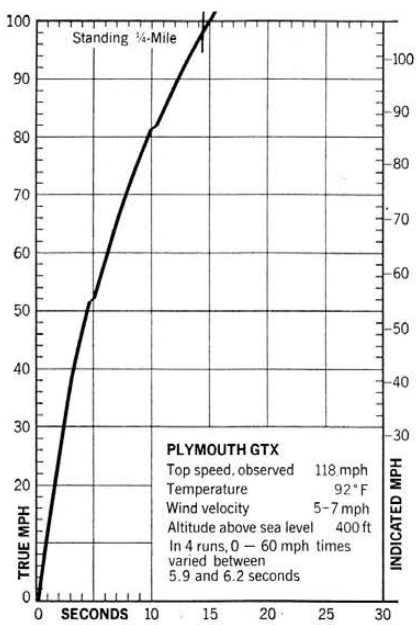
WHEELS AND TIRES

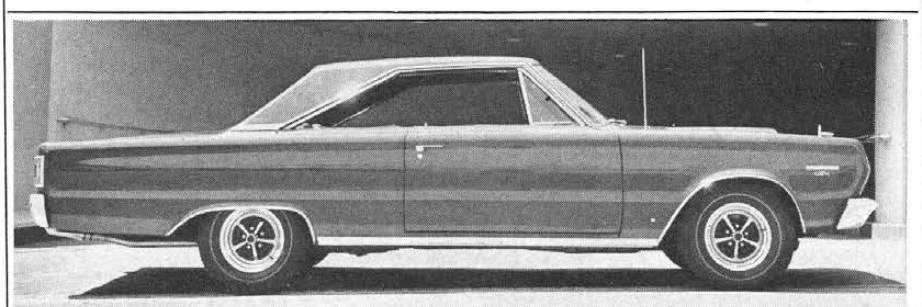
Wheel size and type.....5.5K x 15-in, pressed steel disc, 5-bolt
Tire make, size and type..B. F Goodrich-7.75-14
Test inflation pressures...F: 28 psi, R: 28 psi
Design load capacity 1270 lbs per tire @24 psi

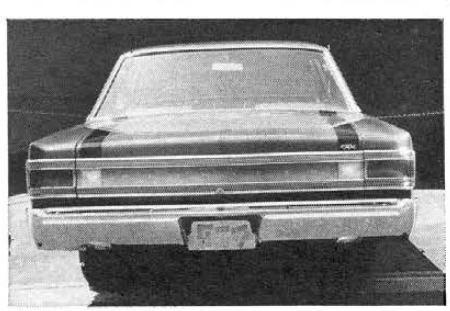
PERFORMANCE

	Seconds
Zero to 30 mph	2.3
Zero to 40 mph	3.2
Zero to 50 mph	4.4
Zero to 60 mph	6.0
Zero to 70 mph	7.7
Zero to 80 mph	9.7
Zero to 90 mph	12.3
Zero to 100 mph	15.1

Standing ¼-mile.....14.4 sec @ 98 mph
80-0 mph.....318 ft (.68 G)
Fuel mileage.....11-15 mpg on premium fuel
Cruising range.....209-285 mi







CHECK LIST

ENGINE
Starting.....Very Good
Response.....Very Good
Vibration.....Good
Noise.....Good

DRIVE TRAIN
Shift linkage.....Very Good
Shift smoothness.....Fair
Transmission noise.....Very Good

STEERING
Effort.....Excellent
Response.....Good
Road feel.....Poor
Kickback.....Good

SUSPENSION
Ride comfort.....Very Good
Roll resistance.....Good
Pitch control.....Very Good
Harshness control.....Good

HANDLING
Directional control.....Very Good
Predictability.....Very Good
Evasive maneuverability.....Fair
Resistance to sidewinds.....Excellent

BRAKES
Pedal pressure.....Excellent
Response.....Very Good
Fade resistance.....Poor
Directional control.....Very Good

CONTROLS
Wheel position.....Good
Pedal position.....Good
Gearshift position.....Very Good
Relationship.....Good
Small controls.....Very Good

INTERIOR
Ease of entry/exit.....Very Good
Noise level (cruising).....Fair
Front seating comfort.....Very Good
Front leg room.....Excellent
Front head room.....Excellent
Front hip/shoulder room.....Excellent
Rear seating comfort.....Fair
Rear leg room.....Fair
Rear head room.....Good
Rear hip/shoulder room.....Very Good
Instrument comprehensiveness.....Fair
Instrument legibility.....Good

VISION
Forward.....Excellent
Front quarter.....Excellent
Side.....Excellent
Rear quarter.....Very Good
Rear.....Very Good

WEATHER PROTECTION
Heater/defroster.....Very Good
Ventilation.....Very Good
Weather sealing.....Excellent

CONSTRUCTION QUALITY
Sheet metal.....Very Good
Paint.....Very Good
Chrome.....Very Good
Upholstery.....Good
Padding.....Good
Hardware.....Good

GENERAL
Headlight illumination.....Very Good
Parking and signal lights.....Good
Wiper effectiveness.....Very Good
Service accessibility.....Good
Trunk space.....Very Good
Interior storage space.....Good
Bumper protection.....Very Good

PLYMOUTH GTX

(continued from page 36)

puted both its comfort and its safety, since it mounts on the rear wheel well and rises to the wearer's shoulder. (In an accident this can place a downward pressure on the spine. But there was also a strong conviction that it was better the spine unprotected than the head.)

We have saved our strongest criticism for last; the brakes, despite being discs with rear drums, faded horribly. We conducted our standard 80-0 panic stop series and were unable to record a practical stopping distance on the third run of the set. The first stop came in 318 ft. at .675 gravities deceleration, the second was worse, and on the third try we wondered if it would stop at all. To re-check, we allowed the brakes to cool and repeated the procedure, with similar results. In view of the fairly good times recorded on the first stop in both test series, we would guess that the GTX brakes are not dissipating heat rapidly enough, causing the pads to glaze. The metallic-lining brakes of the 1966 Hemi seemed to work better, and are still available for the GTX. They well may be a better solution to the stopping problem than the current GTX disc option.

Overall, we were impressed with the GTX. The drive train felt really solid and reliable. It had better be—it's covered by the Chrysler 5-year, 50,000-mile warranty. Along with the manual 4-speed transmission, you will receive an additional performance package on the engine, and a heavier drive train. This includes a 9¾-in. ring gear (in place of the standard 8¾-in. unit used on the automatic). The 440 performance engine comes with an aerated crankcase that prevents oil surge away from the pickup, and reduces friction losses due to the crankshaft striking and dragging through the oil as it turns. Other items included are an unsilenced air cleaner, a dual-breaker distributor for improved high-rpm performance, and a viscous fan drive which also saves horsepower by free-wheeling when it isn't needed. Chrysler says this additional equipment is included on the 4-speed manual version primarily to ensure drive-train reliability. At the same time it practically guarantees GTX owners of being the fastest thing at the drag strip. And even if it won't slow down at the end of a run, it'll stick like sin in that high-speed U-turn. GTO owners had better look to their defenses. **c/d**